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ABSTRACT

Rigid tracking systems structure inequality and affect students' opportunity to learn. Moreover, students gain from participating in rigorous advanced courses. This case study identified the practices and processes involved in creating a school culture of detracking wherein more students participate in high school advanced courses and experience increased success in learning. Methods included interviews with teachers, counselors, and administrators; document analysis; observation of meetings and class sessions; and a survey of 55 teachers at a large, suburban high school with a diverse student body. The study identified specific practices that promoted a culture of detracking--the practices that developed the areas of goals, communication, and support. Findings revealed the importance of shared, collaborative leadership in ongoing efforts to increase student participation and success in advanced courses. Educators communicated to students and parents the benefits of participation in advanced courses through programs, newsletters, and course catalogs. Support was sustained through forming student study teams and Saturday review sessions, providing faculty development opportunities, creating faculty vertical teams, providing incentives and rewards for students and teachers, and conducting a Summer Math Academy. A conclusion is that schools can significantly influence student participation and success in advanced-level courses through proactive goal-setting, support, and communication. Four figures and two tables are included. (Contains 59 references.) (LMI)

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CREATING A CULTURE OF DETRACKING IN A LEARNER-CENTERED SCHOOL: ISSUES, PROBLEMS, AND POSSIBILITIES

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CREATING A CULTURE OF DETRACKING IN A LEARNER-CENTERED SCHOOL: ISSUES, PROBLEMS, AND POSSIBILITIES

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There is a need to identify factors involved in establishing a culture of detracking in a learner-centered high school. To sustain long-term and widespread change, a change in culture to support the initiative is needed (Saphier & King, 1985). Elmore (1996) argued that "attempts to change the stable patterns of the core of schooling are usually unsuccessful on anything more than a small scale" (p. 296). To move reforms in schools to widespread practice involves focusing on what "teachers and students actually do when they are together in the classroom" (Elmore, 1996, p. 297). As Schlectney (1996) suggested, "In education, the changes that count most are those that directly affect students and what they learn" (p. 100). Providing a focus on teaching and learning with high expectations for all students becomes very important in establishing a culture of academic excellence. Oakes and Lipton (1992) suggested that more important than proposing a step-by-step method for detracking a school is the development of a school culture supportive of detracking. However, what assists in creating a culture of detracking in a learner-centered high school has not been identified fully. In fact, Wells and Serna's (1996) research illustrated that resistance to detracking included the concern of parents that "if any student was allowed into an honors class, regardless of his or her prior track, it must not be a good class" (p. 71). Changes in the school culture which are embraced by teachers, administrators, and parents to support more inclusive practices for advanced classes become essential if long-term changes in tracking practices are to be achieved.

In addition to little research on factors involved in creating a culture supportive of detracking in high school, there has also been little research on factors affecting placement decisions of students in advanced courses (Useem, 1992; Gamoran, 1992a). Useem (1992) reported, "There has been a paucity of research on the actual dynamics of placing students in tracks and assigning them to courses" (p. 265). Gamoran (1992a) added, "Studies of the criteria of track placement have been divorced from studies of the process" (p. 186). Gamoran (1992) reported, "Despite attention paid to the effects of tracking, however, research on who gets assigned to the different tracks has been more limited, relying mainly on cross-sectional data and on a narrow set of selection criteria" (p. 185). The process of creating a culture supportive of detracking has largely been ignored. Harklau (1995) added, "Despite years of research on tracking practices and their outcomes, little is known about the process by which such placement decisions are negotiated and ability judgments accomplished in U.S. Schools" (p. 351). Instead, there has been extensive research on the inequities of the present tracking system of reliance on teacher recommendation, specific achievement test scores or higher, and specific grade averages or higher as requirements for admission to advanced courses (Gamoran, 1992a-b; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Marsh & Raywid, 1994).

It is clear that rigid tracking systems structure inequality and impact students' opportunity to learn (Guiton & Oakes, 1995). Oakes (1996) reported, "Despite its widespread legitimacy, there is no question that tracking, the assessment practices that support it, and the differences in educational opportunity that result from it limit many students' schooling opportunities and life chances" (p. 82). However, substantial student gains are provided from participation in rigorous high school advanced courses as noted in Gamoran's (1992b) study of 20,000 students from grades 10, 11, and 12 and Kulik's (1982) meta-analysis of tracking research literature. Accounts of student

achievement gains in schools that have allowed open student selection of the high school advanced courses (DuFour, 1995; Harrington-Lueker, 1993) are emerging in the research literature. In addition, in Oakes (1996) analysis of two cities tracking and within-school segregation issues, "in both school systems, classes that were supposed to be designated for students at a particular ability level actually enrolled students who spanned a very wide range of measured ability" (p. 85). However, despite the wide range of ability, the "largest [achievement] gains were experienced by students who were placed in an accelerated course" (p. 89). Despite the research demonstrating the value of accelerated courses for students who select these courses, 80% of schools continue to employ tracking practices (Marsh & Raywid, 1994). These practices often restrict who has access to the accelerated courses. Research is needed to identify practices and processes which can assist a school in creating a culture of detracking wherein more students participate in high school advanced courses with more students experiencing increased success in learning.

Reported here are the results of a case study to identify the practices and processes which assist in creating a culture of detracking in a learner-centered secondary school. Specifically, this study clarified elements of a school culture which educators can influence to produce greater academic gains for students.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Beliefs About Learning and Effort

Establishing a culture of detracking is important in opening opportunities for success in advanced high school classes to more students. Oakes and Lipton (1992) stated,

The array of practices invented and adopted by untracking schools proves

> enormously helpful for other schools. These schools themselves should not be considered models to be copied but rather purveyors of your vision. The critical lesson they teach is that creating a culture of detracking is more important than any particular organizational arrangement, curricular or instructional strategies attempted by a school as nice as these are. (p. 449)

School culture refers to the beliefs, values, traditions, and celebrations that characterize a school (Deal, 1987). The overall culture reflects the general belief foundations reflective of the school which influence actions about learning and effort.

Beliefs about learning and effort affect closed access to more challenging high school courses. Oakes and Lipton (1992) stated, "If capacity to learn is understood as unalterable and the range in capacity among school children is perceived to be great, then tracking must appear sensible" (p. 449). In the study, "Educational Matchmaking," Oakes, Karoly, and Guiton (1992) further added, "Motivation and ability are considered by many in schools as fixed attributes that educators can not modify" (p. 80). . ."We were struck by the pervasiveness of the belief that by the time students reach high school (and probably long before) their abilities and aspirations are fixed" (p. 43). Damico and Roth (1993) suggested that "adult belief structures about student capacity shaped district policy" (p. 4). Damico and Roth (1993) suggested,

> Policies which sound reasonable and fair may not be so in practice, but their consequences are rarely weighed. . . . Schools can do nothing about individual student factors, such as SES, which correlate with dropping out. They can, however, review and revise their policies and practices. (p. 7)

These beliefs about student capacity to learn have been contrasted with other countries' beliefs about learning and effort. For example, George and Rubin (1992) reported that "Asian countries value effort more than intelligence while the opposite is

true in America" (p. 15). In addition, in Germany when grouping begins in high school, all students have the choice of attending the gymnasium or the vocational schools, a reform that reflects a major change in East Germany (Mintrop & Weiler, 1994). In contrast, in America, many schools begin grouping at a very young age, a practice not used in the foreign countries of England, Denmark, Japan, Germany, and Canada, who do not begin grouping "until the late middle or secondary grades" (McAdams, 1994, p. 34).

In the 1930s Dewey argued that intelligence could not be measured by a score on a standardized test. In the '90s, the work of Gardner (1991) has again challenged the fixed intelligence view. However, the belief that intelligence is a fixed point has been reflected in many schools' practices of establishing specific criteria as entrance requirements for advanced high school classes. As Good and Brophy (1994) suggested "despite a growing willingness by educators to define giftedness more broadly, older methods of identification and selection for program participation still predominate (i.e., academic achievement with emphasis on verbal and test taking skills)" (p. 605). Darling-Hammond (1994) suggested that many districts have not done enough to recognize the potential of students stating, "Disproportionate percentages of poor and minority youngsters (principally Black and Hispanic) are placed in tracks for low-ability and non-college bound students" (p. 13). Ford and Harris (1994) reported, "The identification process helps manufacture the chronic under-representation of Blacks in gifted programs" (p. 220). Oakes, Selvin, Karoly, and Guiton (1992) reported that "High School and Beyond" showed that fewer advanced and more remedial courses are found in schools that serve large numbers of poor and minority populations, and the vocational track is larger while the academic is smaller.

The problem of limiting choices is compounded by the effects of student placement. Flanders (1987) reported the importance of seventh grade math placement in that it is here that the course is set for algebra in eighth grade or regular math. Not only does closed access to rigorous courses occur in high school, the track decision has often been made much earlier by prior grouping decisions (Gamoran, 1992a). Limits to future choices are set and often rigidly enforced though districts vary enormously in their cut-offs for students and in the "weight attached to each criterion" (p. 187). Students may qualify for a more rigorous course and participate in one school while they might have been denied access in another. The problem of limited access to rigorous classes persists in many districts, thus limiting future choices of many students.

Differential Parental Support

That only those parents who practice "spirited advocacy" and are "in the know" get their students into the more rigorous courses is a problem associated with strict entrance criteria for honors courses. As George and Rubin (1992) has cited, "Children of the poor often lack the spirited advocacy of affluent parents to make change" (p. 13). The more affluent parents are also much more likely to develop social networks to stay informed about school practices. Either by direct involvement with the schools through volunteer efforts or close association with parents who do volunteer, they gain access to information regarding the more rigorous courses. The more affluent parents are also more likely to "challenge the placement the school suggests" (Useem, 1992, p. 264). Indeed, some schools are responsive to parents and allow them to sign a waiver for their child to participate in an honors course even if the entrance criteria are not met, yet this practice is often not announced (Oakes, 1994). Research studies suggested that "less-educated and less-affluent parents are more likely to accept the placement decision provided by the school" (Useem, 1992, p. 273). For example, Useem found that "70%

of the mothers of children in the lowest math group in the two districts studied did not know their children were in that level or did not understand it was the bottom group. In contrast only 6% of mothers of children in the accelerated groups did not know the placement" (p. 269). This again creates an issue of equity. If only the more educated parents persist in overriding closed access to courses, then an equitable system is not in place. Useem reported that "parents lack of involvement, social isolation, and reluctance to intervene and influence their child's program in a more demanding direction rather than the child's academic ability accounted for the child's placement in lower-level math" (p. 276). Gamoran's (1992a) review of the literature concerning differential parental involvement by SES (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Lareau, 1987; Useem, 1992) found that this factor results in "differential student opportunity to contest and over-ride school systems with closed access" (p. 201).

Many research findings serve to encapsulate the issue. Gamoran (1992b) stated that, "For many years, students, teachers, and field researchers (Rosenbaum, 1976; Metz 1978; Oakes, 1985) have reported that more learning occurs in higher tracks" (p. 813). George and Rubin (1992) stated that students are exposed to clearly a more enriched curriculum in advanced classes. Hoffer (1992) suggested, "If higher track students are taking advanced academic courses while lower track students are not taking any courses in the knowledge area tested, then positive effects of higher track placement are not surprising" (p. 208).

Rethinking Current Practice

Harold Reynolds, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Board of Education, in the 1990 report entitled "Structuring Schools for Student Success: A Focus on Ability Groups" stated,

> Given the need, to raise academic achievement for all students, we must rethink traditional notions of grouping students. It's time to take a closer look at how student grouping arrangements affect the learning and social-emotional development of students, and to embrace grouping patterns which promote academic achievement for all students, irrespective of current achievement level or background. (Letter preceding p. 1)

Other states have also investigated and issued recommendations concerning tracking and ability grouping. For example, the Virginia State Department surveyed 26 Virginia public school districts, as directed by the House Joint Resolution No. 358, to study math and science course offerings in Virginia and access to these courses. Recommendations from this study included a recommendation that "the Department of Education should establish strategies for the consistent assignment of students to the most challenging courses they can handle and establish a team to examine the current method of assigning students to academic and advanced academic math and science courses" (Virginia, 1992, p. 5). Further, the report recommended that all students have access to two AP (advanced placement) classes or other college level courses (Virginia, 1992). Steps are underway by some states and districts to change past grouping practices which have served as gates for many students.

To achieve equity and excellence in schools and eliminate tracking, many factors are included. While much of the research on tracking focuses on the need to eliminate tracking, many schools continue to enforce rigid grouping policies which enforce tracks. Many students are not encouraged to participate in the more challenging courses. It is important to create a culture of high expectations for students where students are encouraged to participate in advanced level high school courses. This study focused on the identification of practices and processes involved in creating a culture of detracking.

Studying a school that has been successful in encouraging greater student participation and success in advanced courses for five years can provide useful information for other schools to consider as they embark on creating a culture of detracking which encourages greater student self-direction for all.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative single case study was conducted at a large suburban high school reflecting a diverse student body and included teacher, counselor, and administrator interviews; document analysis; and vertical team meetings, a faculty meeting, a parent meeting, and class session observations. On-site interviews lasting from thirty minutes to one hour forty-five minutes were conducted with twenty-two faculty members in the Departments of Math, English, Social Studies, Science, and Counseling.

Data analysis included questioning assumptions, seeking patterns, and looking for both consistencies and inconsistencies in the data to "capture perspectives accurately" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 32). Data analysis also included peer-debriefing and member-checks. To assist in the triangulation of the data, a voluntary survey was administered to teachers in the Departments of English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Counseling, and fifty-five surveys were returned and analyzed. An audit trail was maintained of the transcribed tapes, audio tapes, surveys, and documents collected to verify reliability and validity.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify and isolate practices which assist in establishing a culture of detracking in a learner-centered high school that for over five years has promoted greater student participation and success in inclusive advanced courses. Four research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What specific practices do secondary schools promote that lead to a culture of detracking?
2. How was detracking initiated, implemented, and institutionalized?
3. What have been the benefits of the detracking efforts and the problems?
4. What are ways this reform effort intersects with other high school reform efforts?

Design of the Study

The need for detracking has been documented through quantitative studies such as studies demonstrating the percentage of minority students in challenging courses, the amount of homework provided in various levels of classes, and the achievement test gains of students in various levels of classes. These studies did not, however, capture the insights, nuances of meaning, and perspectives that can be captured through qualitative study. For this purpose, qualitative study is uniquely appropriate. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) related that qualitative research is particularly useful in studying "how people, such as teachers, parents, and students think and how they develop perspectives they hold" (p. 2). This single case study of a high school attempted to identify and isolate the elements involved in creating a culture of detracking and high expectations for students. Because the issue of tracking is a systems issue influenced by the prerequisites prior to high school, the holistic approach of qualitative research is appropriate. Indeed, quantitative studies are less useful for a holistic study when the purpose is to understand elements of a system that influence learning (Patton, 1990). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) stated that, "Qualitative research is useful when a dilemma or situation needs to be addressed for the purpose of understanding and

direction" (p. 49). Particularly, when one is analyzing the "system" rather than only particular aspects of the system, qualitative studies have merit" (p. 78).

In this study, the assumption was made that successful detracking is a function of the entire system. For students to be successful in challenging work in high school, prerequisite skills need to be attained in earlier years. Therefore, the need to comprehensively investigate the factors that influence successful detracking efforts in the high school necessitates interviewing teachers, administrators, and counselors in the high school to discover important relationships, important attitudes, and critical features for success. It was recognized that from this specific case study "ultimate truth" would not emerge (Patton, 1990). Instead, patterns would be discernible, and a clearer understanding of critical features of the school would be attained. It was projected that these findings would be useful in furthering the dialogue of ways to promote detracking and high expectations for students.

Protocol Development

To conduct a qualitative study, Patton (1990) suggested that the researcher must "conduct fieldwork in the setting under study to talk to people and conduct interviews" (p. 10). Before conducting fieldwork, the general rules or procedures that will be followed were established. Yin (1989) referred to this stage in the research process as a case study protocol and suggested the protocol should have the following sections: (1) overview of the case study project, (2) field procedures, (3) case study questions, and (4) a guide for the case study report. The protocol developed for this study included an overview of the case, a timeline for interviews, the procedure for contacting the school and receiving permission to conduct the research, materials of introduction, a research permission form, case study interview questions, the survey instrument, method of maintaining an audit trail, and the guide or outline for writing the report.

Selection of the Site

The researchers' first challenge was to select a school that was experiencing success in creating a culture of detracking while exemplifying a learner-centered school. A further challenge was to select a school involved in the process of detracking for more than five years and which is representative of a diverse student body. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that a site not be selected as "representative of some population, but instead be contrastive to provide as much different information as possible" (p. 265). In addition, Patton (1990) reported that the site should be "an information-rich case for study in-depth" (p. 169). In keeping with these recommendations, Duncanville High School was selected because it was a school involved in the detracking effort over five years with a record of student success in advanced classes. For the past five years, Duncanville High School had also participated in an initiative supported by an external Foundation to increase student participation and success in advanced courses. Enrollment in advanced placement classes had increased from 208 to 573 students in the courses from 1991-1996 (see Table 1). In Duncanville High School's advanced placement and honors courses, students were encouraged not discouraged from participation; and students had widely participated in the challenging courses and experienced strong success.

This study was conducted at the campus site. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that "human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs and the researcher, whenever possible, should go to the site location" (p. 301). The researcher was guided by the belief that going to the site could yield valuable information. Therefore, interviews, observations, and document analysis were conducted on-site at Duncanville High School, recognizing as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, "Context is heavily implicated in meaning" (p. 187).

Table 1.

Advanced Placement Classes Duncanville High School

COURSE	ENROLLMENT				
	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
English 3 AP	36	32	69	108	76
English 4 AP	37	62	40	79	94
Biology 2 AP	30	36	63	50	56
Chemistry 2 AP	19	32	40	53	49
Calculus AP	22	20	63	75	95
American History AP	23	11	13	37	42
Music Theory AP	7	10	15	16	20
Adv. Spanish 1 AP	16	11	24	23	19
Adv. French 1 AP	11	16	14	4	10
Adv. Latin 2 AP	2	9	5	4	3
Adv. German 1 AP	4	8	7	5	9
Government AP		20	25	43	39
Computer Science 2 AP		50	30	26	35
Physics AP					10
European History AP					16
TOTALS	208	317	427	523	573

Note: Used by permission of Duncanville High School.

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Site Description

Duncanville, a suburb of Dallas, Texas, has a population of 38,000. Duncanville Independent School District, located in Duncanville, includes Dallas residents in the attendance zone increasing the size of the district population to 50,000. Duncanville High School is the only high school in the district and has a student body of approximately 2,300. The mobility rate is 20% reflecting the movement primarily of families living in Dallas but included in Duncanville's attendance zone. The housing of the Dallas students is predominantly apartments which reflects the higher turnover rate whereas the Duncanville population primarily resides in single family dwellings. Students of Duncanville are much less mobile than the students from Dallas included in the attendance zone. The parents of students are predominantly well-educated with 75% having some college and 40% having degrees.

The faculty of Duncanville High School includes 165 teachers composed of approximately 35% male and 65% female. The student body of 2,300 includes a female ratio of 52% to a male ratio of 48%. The student body includes ethnic ratios of 52% Anglo, 38% African-American, 9% Hispanic, and 1% other. Of the 631 graduating seniors this year, 54% plan to attend four year colleges or universities, 33% plan to attend two-year community colleges, 4% plan to attend the military, 3% plan to attend trade or technical school, 3% plan on continuing their education, but are undecided as to where, and 2% plan to begin work directly without plans of further education.

Research Schedule

The research schedule was established through a meeting with a Central Office administrator for Duncanville Independent School District followed by a meeting with the principal of Duncanville High School. A method for arranging for the interviews was determined by setting a date to meet with the four Department Chairs of English,

Math, Science, and Social Studies. At the time of the meeting with the Department Chairs, an interview schedule was established. On the day of the meeting with the four Department Chairs, a meeting was also held with the Assistant Principal for Instruction who provided a tour of the school and an introduction to the campus philosophy and programs. Through a meeting with the Director of Counseling, an interview schedule for counselors was established.

Participant Selection

Participant selection was influenced by the desire to obtain depth of understanding about creating a culture of detracking. Department Chairs contacted teachers and counselors to establish interview times. Participation in the research study was voluntary. The participants selected represented the Department of Math, Science, Social Studies, English and Counseling since these Departments directly influence detracking efforts for admission to core subjects.

Data Sources and Collection

Interviews, observations, document reviews, and a survey were used in data collection. Data was collected from the first entry to the district in January with the follow-up member check with an administrator in June. Interviews and observations were primarily conducted in February and March with the follow-up survey for triangulation of data provided in April. The researcher kept an audit trail of materials and responses attained, in addition to research field notes.

From the early research, additional clarity in questions was attained. Any incongruities in the research were noted. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) suggested that "incongruities in the research may give direction" (p. 50). The researcher investigated further any incongruities and verified any inconsistencies discussed by

periodic member checks whereby the interviewer checked with the interviewee to establish if understanding was attained.

Before conducting any interview, the purpose of the study was described and the voluntary nature of the interview discussed. The process of note-taking and audiotaping was described and a choice provided whether notes and/or audiotaping would be utilized during the interview. Field notes were descriptive and detailed as Patton (1990) recommended. An agreement to maintain anonymity of the persons who were interviewed was made. The teachers, counselors, and administrators were informed that an audit trail would be established of field notes, audiotapes, and documents as Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) recommended. Member checks were provided to attain if the researcher understood clearly what was said.

Multiple sources of evidence were needed to attain a comprehensive picture of the school. In a qualitative study, a figurative "snapshot" is taken (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.214), a process Lightfoot (1983) described as a portraiture. In a qualitative study, as in an exemplary portrait, great detail and depth are provided when multiple sources are used. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that "everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" (p. 31). "A broader range of historical, attitudinal, and observational issues" can be addressed by use of multiple sources of data in a qualitative study (Yin, 1989, p. 95). Patton (1990) suggested that three types of data collection are important sources of evidence in qualitative studies, "in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observations, and written documents which may include written responses" (p. 10). Data sources that were used in this study included interviews, data documents, direct observation, and a survey. Interviews were conducted and documents analyzed to obtain information. Documents that were analyzed included course catalogs and student

handbooks. In addition, a scheduling orientation, faculty meeting, and parent meeting were observed.

To assist in triangulation of data, a voluntary survey was administered to all high school teachers of English, science, social studies, and math and to high school counselors. Survey items were selected from the book Making Schools Smarter: A System for Monitoring School and District Progress (Leithwood & Aitken, 1995). The survey instrument was selected, because it had been designed to monitor the presence of important features representative of being a learning organization, a goal expressed by teachers, counselors, and administrators of Duncanville High School. The use of the survey was modeled after Louis and Miles (1990) approach in their published qualitative study, Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why. As Louis and Miles (1990) stated as a rationale for the use of a survey in their qualitative study, "The survey(method) was an important vehicle to test whether the findings that emerged from the cases were supported by a larger representative sample of big-city high schools seriously involved in improvement efforts' (p. 313). To test whether findings from the interviews were indicative of the total Departments of English, Science, Social Studies, and Math, a voluntary and anonymous survey was administered to these groups, since each of the members of these groups impact admission and preparation for advanced core courses. Fifty-five surveys were completed.

Data Analysis

The researcher sought patterns in the data. Data from the interviews were transcribed and field notes studied. Then all information was coded for general patterns and themes. Any inconsistencies were noted. As part of the data analysis, the peer reviewer also looked at the data and the categories formed. This step assisted in removing researcher bias. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to data analysis in

naturalistic inquiry as a process of "uncovering embedded information and making it explicit" (p. 230). The peer review process assisted in discovering information that was embedded. Insights emerged from the way two people interpreted the same data.

Credibility was maintained by triangulation of data, prolonged engagement at the site, and persistent observation as discussed earlier in this report. In addition, credibility was maintained in three additional ways: (l) by peer debriefing to test emerging categories, (2) by keeping a personal journal, and (3) by keeping an audit trail. Meetings with the peer debriefer were held periodically as data were being analyzed. A personal journal was kept to record activities, insights, and questions of the researcher. The reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used as a reminder of areas yet to investigate and as a diary to raise issues, questions, and pursue meaning. Because the researcher has had first-hand experiences with rigidly tracked schools, the journal provided a place to discuss observations in comparison to previous experiences and observations. Through keeping an audit trail or record of materials acquired, such as tapes, field notes, and the reflexive journal, a source to check credibility was obtained. Member checks with interviewees also provided a check for "accuracy and palatability" (Stake, 1995, p. 115). The researcher's job was to "describe in great detail the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied . . . to take the reader vicariously to the setting, . . . and to maximize specific information by and about context" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, pp. 32-22). By completing these tasks accurately, credibility was attained.

Qualitative studies can "provide a perspective and insight into the professional practices of schools" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 45). Transferability was attained by identifying patterns and observations which were "generalizable to theoretical propositions" (Yin, 1989, p. 21). Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested, "Research

is worth doing if it builds knowledge . . . seeking to explain and describe the phenomenon under study" (p. 21). Through the discussion of emerging patterns drawn from the research, transferability was attained. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stressed that it is not researchers' responsibility "to provide an index of transferability; it is their responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (p. 316). The researchers provided description to attain this goal.

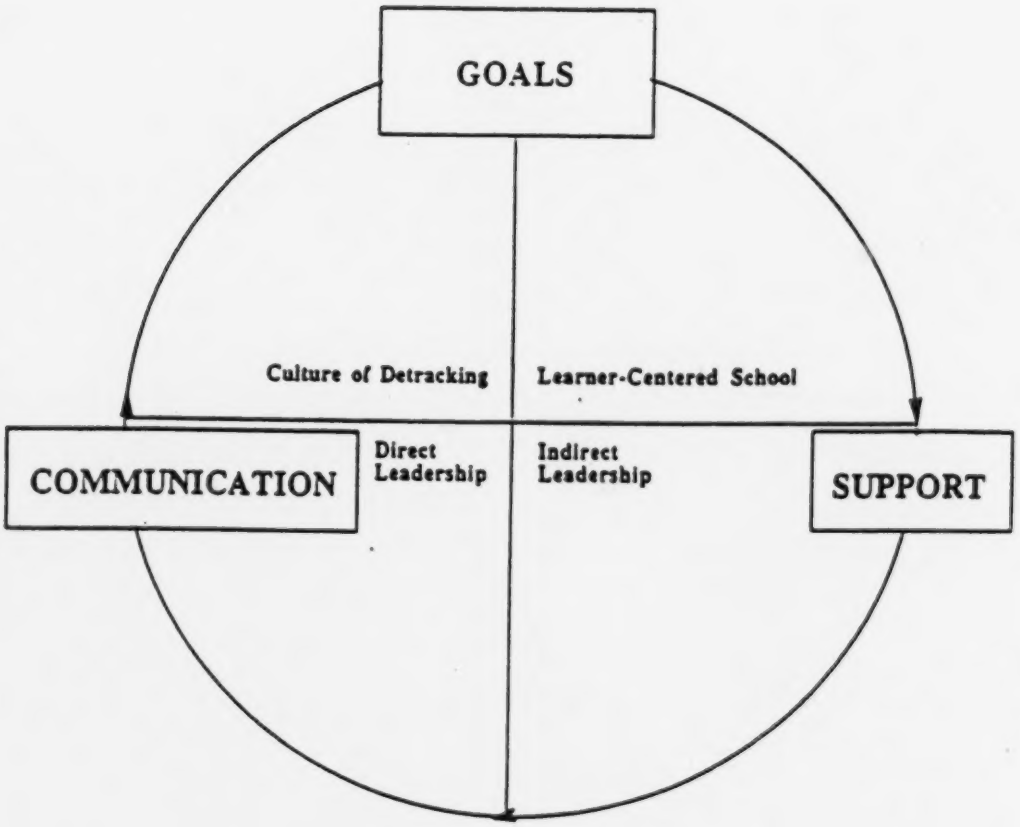
Dependability was attained by the development of the audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the researcher examine the "process by which accounts were kept . . . and the product's actual records" (pp. 318-319). Confirmability was attained by the maintenance of all records as an audit of the study. Through the design of the study, the strength of the qualitative study was confirmed. The procedures for data collection and analysis served as a system of review to assure the accuracy of the research.

FINDINGS

In considering the specific practices that promoted a culture of detracking in this secondary school, three broad themes emerged from the data: goals, communication, and support. Within these broad concepts, practices were identified that developed the areas of goals, communication, and support (see Figure 1). Toward creating a culture of detracking, an analysis of the data revealed the importance of shared, collaborative leadership in ongoing efforts to achieve the goal of increasing student participation and success in high school advanced courses. Benefits of participation in advanced courses were communicated to students and parents through programs, newsletters, and school course catalogs. Support for achieving the goal of greater student involvement and success in advanced courses was sustained through forming student study teams and

Figure 1.

Creating a Culture of Detracking



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Saturday Review Sessions, providing incentives and rewards for students and teachers, providing faculty professional development opportunities, establishing faculty vertical teams, and conducting a Summer Math Academy to promote student success in advanced courses (see Figure 2). The change effort was reinforced through teacher participation in professional development activities and vertical team planning meetings. Providing an inclusive program of advanced courses was an essential goal expressed during staff development and vertical team meetings reflecting what Astuto and Clark (1995) described as leadership demonstrating "moral purpose, a front and center commitment to making a difference in the lives of all students, especially the disadvantaged" (p. 243).

Goals

The goal of opening opportunities for students, nurturing student potential, and providing challenging learning opportunities was supported in this case study. As teachers said:

- Our goal is to get them in, save them, and get them through {the more challenging classes}.
- Our goal is to get students to take the most rigorous classes.
- Teachers must buy into the goal; counselors must buy into the goal, and principals must buy into the goal. Otherwise, one of them opens the gate out.

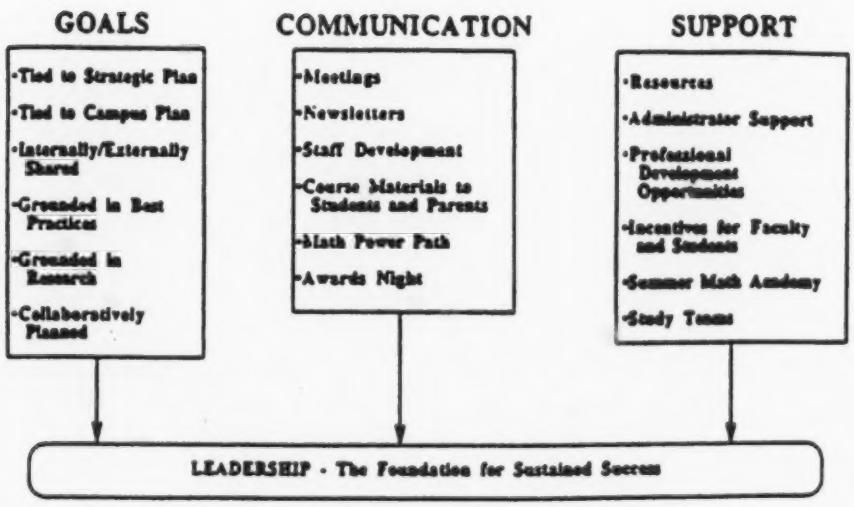
Simply to be guided by a principle that all children can learn is not enough. Instead, educators must broach the difficult questions, "What do we want all children to learn and why they are learning?" (Uhl & Peréz-Sellés, 1995, p. 258). One goal of educators is to consider whether students are exposed to a range of learning opportunities that "capture their imagination, expand their intellectual lives, and increase their access to society's benefits" (Astuto & Clark, 1995, p. 243). As Astuto and Clark

(1995) posited, "Are students given the care, consideration, and nurturing needed to grow into their own potential?" (p. 243). The substance of debate in a learner-centered school should be centered around "teaching, learning, and opening possibilities for students" (Astuto & Clark, 1995, p. 246). As an administrator and teachers commented:

> • I'm delighted to hear that you've heard good things about us. We are not there, yet. I guess we're never {going to get} there. We have experienced success in a lot of areas. We are constantly encouraging kids to stretch. The feeling here is, "You can do whatever you want to, but it does cost effort.' The students are motivated through incentives and a broad range of opportunities. We are giving kids a message, "You are capable.'
>
> • The students don't know what they're really capable of doing until they try, and sometimes it's successful, and a lot of times you say, 'Well, you may not be making the A's, in the beginning, in the honors classes, but there are other benefits you will derive that are not numerical.' We let a student go into the program, even if the teacher does not recommend that student. If the student and parents understand the program and the student and parent say, 'Yes, I want my child in the program'; we don't deny that student, but we explain to the child what is expected.
>
> • Our slogan was 'Every effort for every student.' That was the district Mission Statement for a while, and they haven't done away with it, because I still think it speaks to what we're trying to do, but I know in the strategic plan and the other goal setting for the district, there's a lot of emphasis on, 'We will educate all children,' whether it be through better staff development, better community support, or better instruction in the courses--whatever we need to provide--so

Figure 2.

Leadership: The Foundation for Sustained Success



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that this theme follows through all the campus plans, because they mirror the strategic plan. From there, the campus plan and everything that goes on in that school, is going to mirror that {philosophy} as far as the courses the students take and how we structure these courses. The site-based teams have to keep that concept in mind as they make changes or bring on improvements.

In Duncanville, initially a principal chose to ask "Why? Why should we have one section of an Advanced Placement course in the school? Why don't we have more?" He demonstrated leadership to ask the key questions, then provided support and encouragement to change the present practices. Later, an external Foundation again presented the challenge to educate more students in rigorous classes. An important practice in widening access to advanced courses in secondary school involved setting the goal to increase student participation and success in advanced level courses. As teachers and counselors expressed:

- We have fifteen AP courses. We are constantly thinking that we must encourage and boost enrollment and prepare students for the challenge. We are adding more courses in middle school and have vertical teams in English and math to consider student needs.
- As a staff, we have talked about the things we must do to build up kids, to make them believe in self, and to make school an inviting place for kids
- Our vertical team talks about the ethnic breakdown from time to time. That's one of the goals {increasing minority student participation in accelerated courses}. It has been an effort of the vertical team to turn things around {increasing the percentage of students participating successfully in advanced placement and honors courses}.

The goal to increase the level of challenge and problem-solving in courses is a reform goal that intersects with the goal of including more students in advanced placement courses. More students are encouraged to choose from the wide variety of course offerings reflecting multiple areas of interest. As one teacher commented, "Several of my AP students are also in media-tech or drafting." This example is just one illustration of a culture that is encouraging and is promoting choices, decision making, and goal setting for detracking and greater student success. As a teacher stated:

> This district has strong leadership and a common direction we are going in, and even though we may look at different things each year, they all serve a common purpose, in terms of how we teach children and how we try to improve their success.

Support

Practices to provide support for the change effort in overcoming past organizational behavior included providing staff development and providing rewards and resources. Teachers emphasized:

- I think the training has meant the most to me. I was the first AP teacher, and I went to school in the summer going to College Board Institutes the semester before we even started the class. I had taught it before, but it had been a long time. So, I felt we had backing, and that helped.
- I've learned something new each time. I've learned such wonderful things there {at each training session}, and you learn how all is interconnected and how if you might have done something differently, it might have helped the next level, and it's just a matter of knowing how to present some of these concepts.
- We've gone to two Institutes {seminars} a year just about, for several years. It has made a difference.

Elmore (1996) emphasized that it is important in a change effort to create structures that promote learning of new practices and to provide incentive systems to support them. As teachers pointed out:

- If it's going to endure, it needs to have support from the administration, because it's a lot of extra work, and without support it would go back to being what it was.
- I've only been here a year, but there's a commitment through the whole district, not simply from the Superintendent, but all the way down to the teachers and support staff. Everyone.
- One {expectation} is to give the students opportunities, and I know this school is doing that.
- So many kids are going out of state to private schools {for college}. I've written more letters this year than I've ever written. The kids have that confidence. They are competitive, and they are being accepted. I think it's a reflection on our school district and the opportunities we have, and a lot of that has to do with the AP program. Kids are getting scholarships, and they are applying for more scholarships.
- It isn't finished [getting all faculty to buy in]. It's ongoing work. The first thing was to have an excited group of teachers. You have to have that and not just one person, I think, because you have to have someone to support you through difficult times; but, you have to have an excited group, and then you know the results excite other people.

McLaughlin (1993) further argued that it is important to engage working networks of teachers to sustain support, for the difficult task of integrating new programs. The

vertical team process for Departments of English and math at Duncanville High School provide a collaborative unit of support. Teachers commented:

> • The vertical teaming, I think that has helped a lot. The teachers feel like they have some continuity, and everyone has the same expectation. I think that has helped a lot.
>
> • I think the vertical team that we formally started this year is one of those practices where we're going to see real results in the future. I'm really looking forward to next year, when everything is basically implemented, to see the actual progress over the next five years. That will be fun.

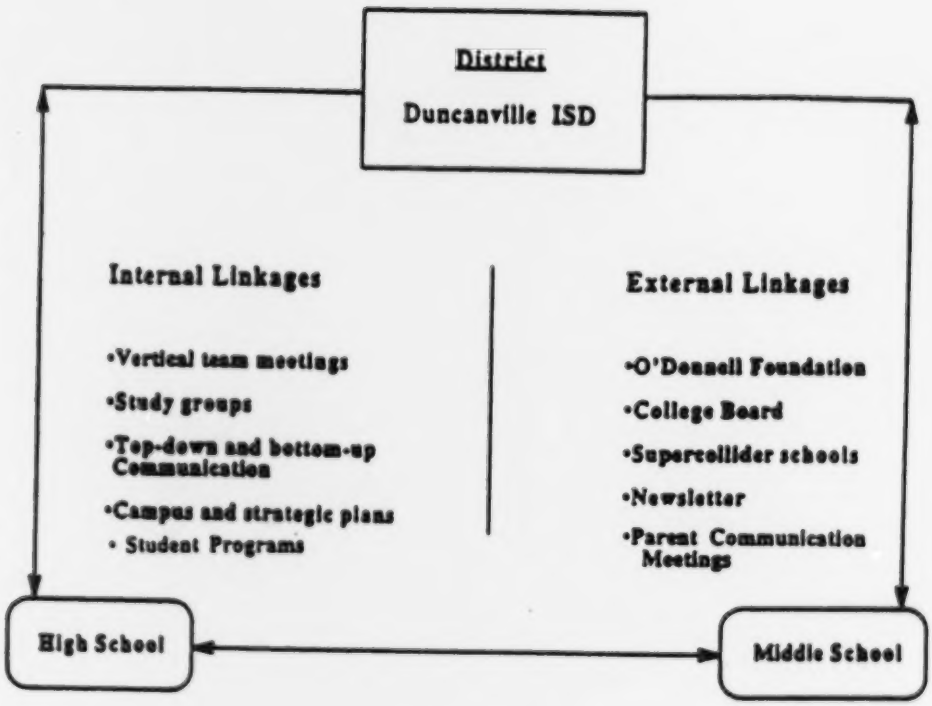
External collaborative networks of other schools involved in the Supercollider Initiative and of other schools offering inclusive AP programs provide further support through the sharing that occurs. (see Figure 3). As a teacher commented:

> We have a lot of sharing at our school--a lot of sharing. We know that when we go off to conferences that we will be expected to come back and share, and we have a lot of that.

Saphier and King (1985) identified norms of a school culture that are essential if school reform is widespread. They are norms of: "collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, referring to a knowledge base, appreciation and recognition, caring and humor, involvement in decision-making, and trust or open and honest communication" (p. 67). Observations of two vertical team meetings and the teachers' descriptions of the vertical team process provided illustrations for the cultural norm of collegiality described above. The researchers were impressed by the open and honest sharing of ideas in a true collaborative nature, with all participants equally respected in the vertical team meetings. There seemed to be no hierarchy in this professional development and decision-making group. It was clear that

Figure 3.

Important Networks for Collaboration



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teachers were sharing ideas of best practice, with caring, humor, and a strong trust level evident.

Institutional incentives were also important in promoting long-term change and influencing teachers' actions as Elmore (1996) suggested concerning change efforts. For example, if a district rewards teachers for the percentage of students passing the AP test with no concern for how many students take the test, the incentive structure could encourage rigid selection procedures, so that only the students most likely to pass the advanced test would be allowed to take the test. Support has been provided from the Central Office and campus administrators to encourage higher numbers of students to take the courses by recognizing that, if enrollment increases, percentages passing the tests may go down, "at least at first," though the overall number of students passing the test would increase. Support for inclusive policies was provided from all levels of the district, as one teacher commented:

> You always worry about numbers [passing the AP test], because we're in the goldfish bowl, and they publish the numbers passing per school in the newspaper, but I have, on many occasions, and again recently from our Assistant Superintendent, heard the comment that she is aware that the increases in number will make a difference in the percentage passing, and this is just the way it is, and that is not something they are concerned about, certainly at first.

An external Foundation provided a strong measure of support for achieving long-term change to greater student participation and success in advanced courses through incentives provided. Examples of incentives included classroom resources provided for advanced classes, payment of ongoing staff development, and financial rewards for outstanding success in numbers of students passing the AP test. In addition, the external Foundation provided support for students through funding Saturday study

sessions and the two-week Summer Math Academy, through scholarships for outstanding scores, through calculators provided if students attended all three study sessions, and through recognition of students through media coverage. These supportive practices led to a culture encouraging greater student participation in advanced courses and greater success.

Communication

Finally, communication emerged as a practice influencing the development of a culture of detracking. For schools to succeed, we must look beyond our classrooms to involve communities and families (Riley, 1996). Duncanville High School took a proactive stance toward communication with teachers and the community through newsletters and newspaper articles. Parents were also invited to awards ceremonies and the math Power Path night (see Figure 4). Providing information to parents and students through newsletters, the media, and parent-student meetings were effective forms of communication. As teachers commented:

- The Foundation sent out newsletters to teachers in the district, and I'm not sure how much further it spread. Seems like it came out four times a year with just an update on how schools were doing, how the scores were looking, and what teachers were being recognized for different things. They made a point of promoting [the program].
- When the Foundation was involved, there was a lot of media publicity. They were very much into ensuring that any activity go recognized in the local paper and the newsletter that the Foundation published. When that goes out, the work among parents is, 'My child's picture is in the newsletter,' a lot of word of mouth. This community is very much networked with itself.

Figure 4.

Duncanville High School Celebrations of Success

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These forms of communication emphasized that the rigorous nature of accelerated classes are not influenced by whether rigid criteria exist but rather by the curriculum designed for the program. "The standard is set by the curriculum," as one teacher explained. The students must meet the standard; but, to assist students in doing so, they are encouraged to form study groups with other students and to meet with the teacher for extra help. As teachers explained:

- We'll talk about how to be an honors student, what is an honors attitude? How does it help to study with other people and form study groups? You have to intervene and teach attitude. In the pre-AP and AP classes, you must take the role of a coach as well. You must say, I know you are doing much, and the term paper is due. How can we manage this so you can do both? You let them know you care and will work with them, but you still hold the standards high. If they know you care, they'll keep working for you.
- The curriculum is taught to whomever is there. The pace is determined by the curriculum and the timing of the AP test. You don't bring the level of the class down just because you have some weaker students in it. We encourage study groups and pair students in a study group for give-and -take. The peer groups are very helpful, and if they will get involved in a study group, it will give a lot of the support needed. It's a rigorous class, and they know it, and they sometimes would rather make a C or a low grade and get the challenge. I have such respect.

One teacher found that the time the instructor had lost in block scheduling had been regained by the extra time students were putting in after class to seek help. That the courses are rigorous was clearly communicated to parents and students. As a teacher explained:

> We also want parents to see that these are really tough classes, to know when the kid says, 'I need to study 15 minutes more,' that the parents will support the kid. We want parents to go away knowing these are rigorous classes.

The story of Duncanville High School's success in detracking through the three stages of change of initiation, implementation, and institutionalization is a story of leadership and the willingness to commit resources to the effort. Funds were provided to purchase materials needed for the challenging courses, and teachers who volunteered to participate in the effort were provided professional development opportunities. For some professional development activities, both teachers and administrators were participants. For other sessions administrators provided a supportive role for teachers.

During the initiation stage of change, the detracking reform in Duncanville High School began through the questions raised by an administrator. Yet, the change effort was reinforced through teacher leadership from attendance at professional development activities to planning programs for student success. Beliefs about learning were crystallized during professional development opportunities. One of the teacher leaders interviewed in the study suggested that providing inclusive programs of advanced courses was an essential feature of the staff development.

During the implementation phase of increasing participation and success in advanced classes, teacher and administrator leadership was evidenced as individuals refused to accept limited views of what students can do, and instructors sought to provide a challenging, engaging content for learning. Leadership can be displayed through "policies and norms, academic expectations, student opportunity to learn, instructor organization, and academic learning" (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, p. 38). Duncanville High School demonstrated each of these forms of leadership enacting

policies to support inclusive programs and high expectations for students, as well as providing students with the opportunity to learn in well organized classes with an emphasis on learning.

During the institutionalization phase, creating a culture of detracking in a learner-centered school with greater student participation and success was enhanced through communication, goals, and support strengthened by the influence and support of the external Foundation. Leadership of top Central Office administrators, campus principals, and teachers continued throughout each phase of the reform effort. Ongoing implementation and institutionalization of the reforms occurred through the joint collaborative efforts of administrators, teachers, external supporters, and community members who maintained a clear sense of purpose in providing a path toward excellence which is open to all students.

Challenges

A primary challenge is to continue to increase the minority student population's involvement in the advanced classes, because, historically, minority students have been underrepresented in gifted and/or accelerated programs (Passow & Frasier, 1994). The vertical team and preadvanced placement classes were praised as the primary vehicles to assist in this endeavor. One teacher was particularly pleased because ten of her twenty-five students were minority students. Clearly, the goal was to establish outreach to all students. As she said, "Our goal is to get them in, save them, and get them through. We must get them ready [in 9th grade] for the pace of the block." The challenge then is not just to get students "in" the classes but to instead help provide the skills and support so that they stay enrolled in the challenging courses. This takes the ongoing encouragement and work of counselors, teachers, and administrators.

Keith (1996) reported, "The turnover of teachers in many urban districts presents an added difficulty for sustaining school-based reform initiatives; these could prove ephemeral unless accompanied by structural changes that foster continuity" (p. 62) . Although Duncanville High School does not have high teacher turnover, some turnover does occur, and it becomes important to mentor the new staff members through participation in training and staff meetings devoted to discussion of goals of the program and to continue vertical teams as part of the structure of the school. Part of the challenge is that it is "ongoing work." It is very important "to have an excited group of teachers who believe in the importance of getting more students on the Power Path to success," as a teacher commented. As teachers leave the district, it is important to replace them with persons of similar philosophies, if possible.

Ongoing staff development is also a key. As Treffinger (1995) suggested, "We cannot expect to create the significant schools we need for tomorrow's world if we limit education to yesterday's technology and resources" (p. 96). A challenge exists to provide ongoing staff development and to join with Colleges of Education to ensure that beginning teachers and administrators have the needed knowledge to sustain a culture of detracking in a learner-centered school.

The primary issue, as with any successful change effort, is how to sustain the change effort. As the external Foundation incentives end, one challenge is to acquire funding for incentives. This is the last year that student exams will be paid for and awards for passing scores will be provided by the Foundation. There is a challenge to evaluate what practices can be continued and to find funding to continue to support the program. Ongoing staff development will still be needed even after the commitment ends. Supplies for advanced classes will be needed; but, a primary challenge is to continue the rewards and recognition for students who benefit in advanced courses even

if the monetary rewards of a $100.00 for a 3 or $200.00 for a 4 or 5 on the AP examinations are no longer available. The district must consider what is feasible to continue and make a plan to do so, perhaps involving local businesses, corporations, and/or parent groups. Wohlsteder, Smyer, and Mohrman (1994) argued that keys to success (in academic school reform and change) are to involve greater knowledge and skill, greater information, and a different reward structure. How best to continue reward structures is one challenge the district now faces as the incentive program ends.

Participants' Perceptions of School Culture

As indicated earlier, a survey was conducted to triangulate the information . Results of the survey (see Table 2) suggested that the Departments of English, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Counseling are reflective of a collaborative culture and a learning organization. The survey (total completed =55) was rated on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 designating "strongly disagree' and 4 designating 'strongly agree." A designation was provided for 'not applicable or don't know." Survey results responses were computed by calculating the means for each indicator of school culture. Because some indicators were not rated by all respondents, the means were obtained by dividing the sum of ratings by the sum of responses for each item. As shown on Table 2, the survey was used to denote strengths and weaknesses of the school in relationship to the 'ideal' of a learning organization. A rating of 2.50 or above on a 4.00 scale would indicate strengths. A rating of 2.49 or below would indicate areas of weakness in demonstrating this feature of a learning organization. The survey is future-oriented, because it can be used to help a school identify features that may be desired and can be altered to fit the purposes desired (Leithwood & Aitken, 1995). For purposes of this study, the section of the survey concerning school discipline was omitted as it was not pertinent to this study, and five items were added.

Table 2.

Teacher and Counselor Perceptions of School Culture

Culture Indicators	Mean
Most teachers in our school share a similar set of values, beliefs, and attitudes related to teaching and learning.	2.93
I have close working relationships with my colleagues in our school.	3.31
There is ongoing, collaborative work among teachers in our school/department.	3.16
Our school administrators share teachers' values, beliefs, and attitudes related to teaching and learning.	2.76
There is a strong, positive relationship between students and staff in our school.	2.87
Our school celebrates the achievements of staff and students.	3.02
I have frequent conversations about teaching practices with colleagues in our school.	3.06
I frequently work with colleague(s) in our school to prepare unit outlines and/or instructional material	2.71
I share my professional expertise by demonstrating new teaching practices for colleagues.	2.76
We observe each other teaching and then discuss our observations to gain better understanding of our own teaching strategies.	2.05
I adhere to school curriculum decisions agreed on in collaboration with my colleagues.	3.26
Our school emphasizes creating a positive atmosphere for our students.	3.19
Our staff praise and reward students' exemplary efforts and behavior.	3.25
Students in our school need to meet or exceed clearly defined expectations.	3.04
I meet with students informally outside school hours.	2.62
I hold high expectations for individual student learning and behavior.	3.48
I model lifelong learning for my students.	3.46

(table continues)

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Table 2, continued

Teacher and Counselor Perceptions of School Culture

Culture Indicators	Mean
Our school recognizes teachers who are exemplary in their classroom and schoolwide practices.	2.80
Our school administration acts in the best interests of the individual students.	2.94
Planning for and helping students learn is my most important work.	3.63
My school administrators protect my classroom instructional time.	2.64
Strong, positive relationships between staff and school administration facilitated implementation of new programs.	2.81
I frequently implement new programs or new teaching strategies.	2.94
I engage in ongoing, professional development for myself.	3.57
I am motivated to implement new programs.	3.16
I am satisfied with my job	2.84
Administrators in my school encourage professional risk taking and experimentation.	2.94
I emphasize the importance of effort as a cause for success as well as ability.	3.48
It is important for teachers to communicate to their students the expectation that the students can learn to high levels.	3.69
As a teacher, I encourage students to set goals for themselves.	3.44
Communicating clear expectations is important to student success.	3.73
Clear and specific feedback on performance is a tool used to help students succeed.	3.60

Note: Highest level of agreement is designated by 4.00.
Total completed surveys equals 58.

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The results of the survey suggested that faculty members in these five departments have similar perceptions about the school culture, with teachers and counselors rating the school culture above 2.50 on all but one area representing a learning organization. Ratings above 3.50 were provided for the following areas: "Planning for and helping students learn is my most important work" (3.63); "I engage in ongoing, professional development for myself" (3.57); "It is important for teachers to communicate to their students the expectation that students can learn to high levels" (3.69); "Communicating clear expectations is important to student success" (3.73); and "Clear and specific feedback on performance is a tool used to help students succeed" (3.60). The only area of the school culture not receiving a rating of at least 2.50 was, "We observe each other teaching and then discuss our observations to gain better understanding of our own teaching strategies" (2.05). These findings concur with Fullan's (1995) suggestion that collaborative work cultures focus, in a sustained way, on the "continuous preparation and professional development of educators, in relation to creating and assisting learning conditions for all students" (p. 233). Cuban (1990) suggested that there is a deep systemic incapacity of U.S. schools and practitioners who work in them to develop, encourage, and extend new ideas about teachers and learning in anything but a small number of schools and classrooms. Creating collaborative structures such as vertical teams and study groups is a way in which the faculty are making the critical intersections between the reform efforts and impacting long-term change.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify practices and processes in establishing a culture of detracking in a high school. The qualitative single case study was conducted by going to the site to conduct interviews with teachers, counselors, and administrators

and to engage in on-site class and meeting observations. To assist in the triangulation of the data, a voluntary survey was administered to teachers in the departments of English, math, science, social studies, and counseling. The following conclusions emerged from the analysis of the interviews, observations, and survey data.

Being proactive in establishing and working to attain the goal of providing greater student encouragement and preparation for advanced courses is an essential practice in developing a culture of detracking. The process of shared leadership by teachers and administrators is important for program success, though primary leadership can stem from multiple sources in the system. Commitment is also an essential element in developing a culture of detracking reflective of greater student participation and success in advanced courses wherein decisions and actions are based on the mission, goals, and core values of the school.

Providing support for efforts in detracking encompasses many practices. For example, providing incentives and rewards for student and faculty involvement and success relative to inclusive, advanced courses can speed the change effort and help to sustain the program. Being part of a collaborative network with other schools intent on increasing student participation and success in advanced courses also contributes to developing a culture of detracking. In addition, high quality professional development directed toward increasing student participation and success in advanced courses is beneficial.

Communication about ways to increase student participation and success in advanced courses is also important. Schoolwide collaborative processes, such as faculty vertical team meetings, facilitate program growth and student development. Participation in accelerated classes produces benefits for students which strengthens the culture of detracking as celebrations are held and stories of success are shared.

Assigning advanced placement teachers to regular level classes in addition to AP or Honors classes helps to improve the overall instructional processes used and increases communication concerning student needs.

The findings of this present study of the importance of goals, support, and communication suggest that the detracking of schools is not an automatic process. Intervention is important in increasing student participation and success in advanced level courses. Hallinan (1996) found that currently there is greater movement within tracks; however, there is still a concern that low-SES students are underrepresented in the advanced tracks. The primary benefit of taking proactive steps to create a culture of detracking is that communication and support with shared collaborative leadership toward the goal of building a vital, inclusive advanced program results in greater student confidence and increased student learning. As one teacher expressed regarding program benefits:

> I'm looking at faces. When you look at the faces, you know how successful the program is. When I go to sleep at night, I know every student either got dual credit or Advanced Placement credit [of the sixty students who took calculus in high school]. I have a good night's sleep.

One challenge is to continue to help more students acquire the prerequisite skills to be successful in the advanced courses, a goal of vertical teams.

The school's practices can be replicated by other schools. Although this school had support for the detracking efforts from an external Foundation, the actions of this school can be replicated in other schools without Foundation support. Additional resources for incentive rewards and/or classroom resources to support the effort can be acquired through business partnerships, fund-raising, and/or in-kind contributions from other organizations.

This study clarified the practices and processes that assisted in creating a culture of detracking in a high school by educators committed to equity and excellence. Opening opportunities to advanced classes, teaching needed prerequisite skills, and providing support for student success were all elements of importance in creating a culture of detracking which emphasized the vital role of both ability and effort to success. Rather than to continue the status quo of tracking in schools, this study suggested that schools can significantly influence student participation and success in advanced level courses through goal-setting, support, and communication--practices and processes attainable by all schools. As an administrator commented, "There is nothing magical about what we have done. The magic is the commitment. If anyone says, 'It can't be done', they are wrong. It most definitely can."

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